

Public Affairs Office

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Press Release

October 28, 2005

PR No. 05-10-28-01

4th Infantry Division cases its colors

FORT HOOD, Texas – Marking the official start of the 4th Infantry Division's deployment to Iraq in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom, Soldiers of the Ironhorse Division cased their colors at a ceremony on Fort Hood's Cameron Field today.

Four hundred seventy Soldiers from the division's Support Brigade are already serving in Iraq and are providing logistical support in the Baghdad area of operations. More than 20,000 Soldiers from the division will be deployed by Christmas.

“Only 580 days ago, you (the 4th Inf. Div.) cased your first colors when you went to Iraq – yet here we are again,” said Lt. Gen. Thomas Metz, commanding general of III Corps and Fort Hood. “You have a tough job ahead of you with a tough and nasty insurgency. I can assure you that the enemy knows the 4th Infantry Division is back in town.”

During OIF 1, the division was headquartered in Tikrit and conducted operations throughout the “Sunni Triangle.”

This time, the division will deploy to Baghdad and will focus on training the Iraqi Army and building Iraqi force capability to assume responsibility for their own security and self reliance.

“Our main goal is to train the Iraqi forces so they can take care of their own security,” said Maj. Gen. J.D. Thurman, commanding general of the 4th Inf. Div. “I believe the Iraqi people will prevail with the help of our American Soldiers, coalition forces, Marines, the Air Force and the Navy, because they are doing a great job over there.

“I expect a lot out of the Iraqi forces. We are there to help them, and they have to take the lead. Everything we do will have Iraqis in the lead. We want them to be successful, and we will help them be successful, but they have to take command.”

Since returning from Iraq in April 2004, the division reorganized into a modular formation.

During the past 18 months, the division has executed a deliberate gate training strategy focused on full-spectrum operations. Three brigade combat teams recently concluded training rotations at the National Training Center and one brigade combat team’s mission rehearsal exercise took place at Fort Hood.

“I feel more at ease this time because I know what's going to happen,” said Staff Sgt. Kevin Dukes, operations sergeant with 3rd Battalion, 16th Field Artillery Regiment, 2nd BCT, who was with the division the first time it deployed to Iraq. “A lot of Soldiers look up to me because I have combat experience. I try to instill that the training we do is very important, because it could save your life when we are in Iraq.”

Although the division returns to the desert with plenty of combat experience, many Soldiers have never seen combat action and have mixed feelings.

“I’m nervous about going to Iraq but a little excited,” said Spc. John Lewis, health care specialist with Headquarters and Headquarters Battery, 2nd Battalion, 77th Field

Artillery Regiment, 4th BCT. "Today's ceremony was really moving and it signified the ending here and the beginning of a new life, for a year, when the colors are uncased in Iraq."

Thurman said he felt the mission will be accomplished when he brings every one of the Soldiers back.

"I believe that this mission is important because I don't want my grandchildren worrying about someone blowing up a mall while they are there," said Thurman. "We have to finish this Global War on Terrorism.

"We don't have a choice whether we are successful in this Global War on Terrorism. We must be successful. The important thing is to never forget what happened on Sept. 11."